

activity

2008/2009

report



The IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group

The Cat Specialist Group is responsible for the global assessment of the conservation status of all 37 wild living cat species. We coordinate and support the activities of some 200 leading scientists, nature conservation officers and wild life managers in currently 57 countries. The main tasks include:

- to maintain the network of cat experts and partners;
- to continuously assess the status and conservation needs of the 37 cat species;
- to support governments with strategic conservation planning;
- to develop capacity in felid conservation;
- to provide services to members and partners;
- to assure the financial resources for the Cat Specialist Group.

For the activity reports we present some of our achievements against these six main tasks.

Christine Breitenmoser-Würsten and Urs Breitenmoser
Co-chairs IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group

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The Network

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The Network

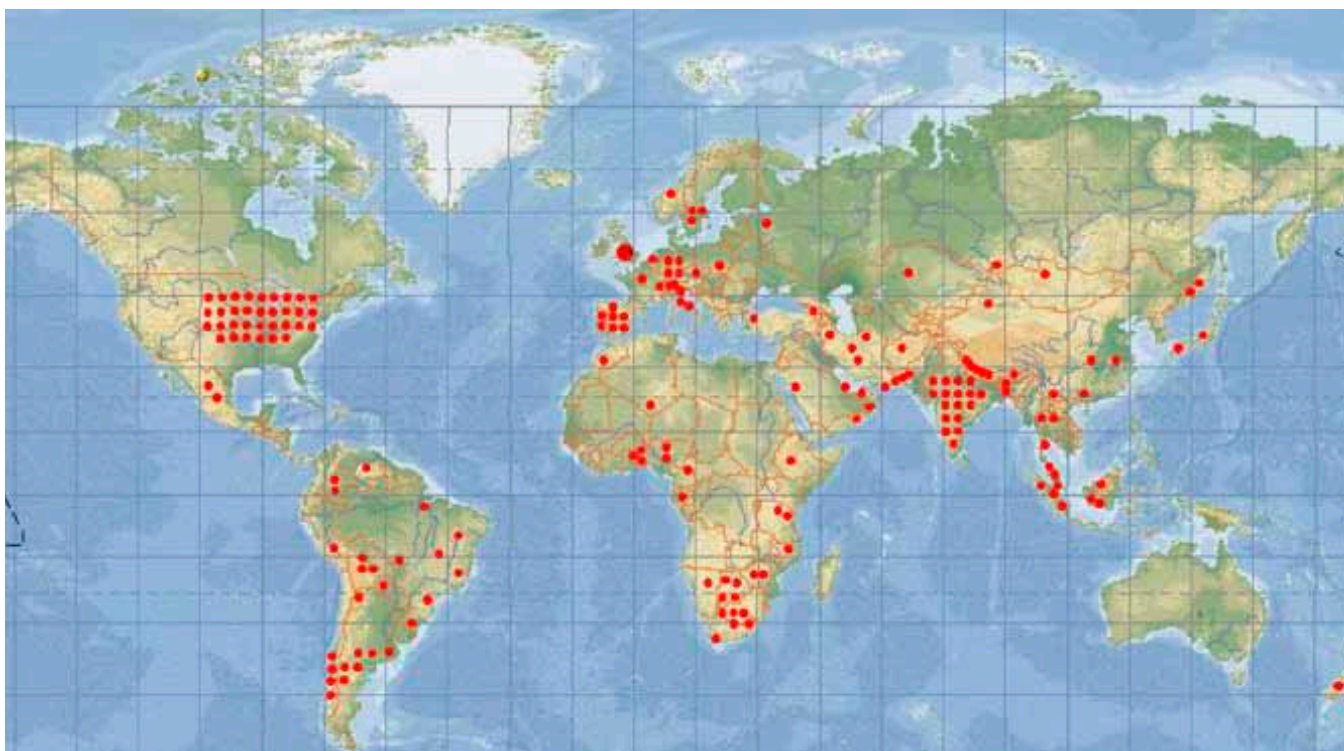
The reconstitution of the Cat Specialist Group



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The IUCN/SSC Specialist Groups have to be reconstituted every quadrennial. After the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in 2008, the Specialist Groups did formally no longer exist until the chairs and members were reappointed. Before re-inviting experts to join the Cat Specialist Group, we sent a questionnaire to all mem-

bers to evaluate their activities and commitment to continue to serve as members of the Cat SG. The Cat Specialist Group has currently 202 members from 57 countries, among which 35 new members from 20 countries. The new members have helped to close a few gaps in cat countries mainly in Africa and Asia (see map).



SSC Specialist Group Chairs' Meeting, Al Ain, 11 – 14 February 2008

The first-ever meeting of the SSC Specialist Group Chairs took place on 11-14 February 2008 in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates, and was generously sponsored by the Environment Agency, Abu Dhabi (with the SSC, D. Swarovski & Co. and Conservation International as co-sponsors).

The meeting was designed to celebrate the voluntarism of the Chairs, acknowledge their enormous contribution to global conservation over the last six decades and to re-focus our efforts on species conservation. The meeting was attended by 122 delegates – over 80 specialist group chairs as well as key people from the IUCN headquarters and regional offices.

The meeting was a resounding success. Topics on the agenda included the SSC design for the future, IUCN policy, the World Conservation Congress, tools for species and area-based conservation planning, communications, Red Listing and assessment work, and networking – allowing the Chairs to share their knowledge and experience with each other.



The 2008 World Conservation Congress

From 5 to 14 October, 2008, the World Conservation Congress was held in Barcelona, Spain. More than 6,600 participants from government, the public sector, non-governmental organisations, business, UN agencies and social organisations discussed, debated and agreed on solutions for the world's most pressing environmental issues.

During the Congress, 7 thematic pavilions were set up on the main floor of the convention centre and displayed the work of IUCN. The Species Pavilion was in one of the best locations, opposite the VIP area. The specialist groups had the opportunity to present their species and work in form of a poster, a Power Point show and profile of their group. We have been able to present all three products.

The SSC Chair's Citation of Excellence Award

The SSC Chair's Citation of Excellence, created in 2004, is awarded in recognition of outstanding contributions to species conservation. We have received this award in Barcelona „in recognition of their dedicated leadership of the Cat Specialist Group, their many conservation contributions and particularly for their ongoing battle on behalf of the Iberian lynx.“



3rd Meeting of OGRAN (Observatoire du Guépard en Région Afrique du Nord)

Parc National de la Pendjari, Bénin, 10 – 13 March 2008



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Benin accepted to host the 3rd OGRAN (Observatoire du Guépard en Régions d’Afrique du Nord) conference, the first two taking place in Paris, France, and Tamanrasset, Algeria. The meeting was held at the hotel located in the middle of the Pendjari National park from 10 to 13 March 2008. OGRAN members, large felid specialists, conservationists and responsible authorities of the regional and national parks and management units from various countries of West Africa met in order to (1) present progress reports on the status of the cheetah in the countries of West Africa, (2) identify the most urgent actions to save the species in the region, and (3) train park wardens to increase their knowledge on species biology, field sign recognition and monitoring methods.

The first day was devoted to presentations on the situation of the cheetah in the region, namely in Burkina-Faso, Benin, Togo, Niger, Algeria and Nigeria. The situation of cheetah in North and West Africa is poorly understood and the information comes mainly from protected areas. The status reviews were followed by two talks on human-wildlife conflicts from Niger and Benin. On the second day, participants were introduced to strategic conservation planning, principles and methods of monitoring cheetah populations and to the Cheetah Conservation Compendium, an online information platform for cheetahs (www.catsg.org/cheetah). The third day was reserved for the training of park wardens from Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger for predator identification. They received a richly illustrated identification guide including basic information on monitoring methods. The wardens were also informed about the results of a survey carried out in northern Benin thanks to their collaboration in 2006. The fourth day, a visit of the park was organised by the CENAGREF (Centre National de Gestion des Réserves de Faune).





We have, together with a national consultant from Iran, conducted the terminal evaluation of the project “Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah, Its Natural Habitat, and Associated Biota in the Islamic Republic of Iran” (CACP). Four out of five project implementation sites around the central Kavir desert were visited to meet with stakeholders, and in an extended period in the office, relevant reports and studies generated by the CACP were reviewed. During the course of the mission, interim findings were presented to Department of Environment (DoE) and UNDP representatives in Tehran. The GEF Medium Size Project (MSP) was scheduled for four years. It started in 2001 and ended in spring 2009, after three extensions. The CACP was a difficult project to evaluate, as it lasted more than seven instead of the initially planned four years, and was undergoing considerable management fluctuations, with key positions changing several times.

The good habitats including cheetah distribution areas beyond the original five CACP sites and the most important prey have been established. New protected areas were created or existing reserves upgraded, 32 new guards were hired, and the management of remaining cheetah areas was improved. One of the most important achievements however was the high level of awareness created among DoE staff, local people, Iranian media, and the global conservation community. The work in schools and the production of educational materials through the CACP and its partners have led to an increasing support from the Ministry of Education. The fate of the cheetah and its conservation has been integrated into the curriculum, an important step for the future of the species.



Consultative Meeting on the “Re-introduction of Cheetah to India” Gajner, India , 9 – 10 September 2009



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Cheetahs, once roaming from central Asia far south into India, have disappeared from the subcontinent half a century ago. The idea to bring Asiatic cheetah from Iran back to India goes back to the late 1970s, but it was abandoned with the swift decrease of the Iranian population after the Islamic revolution. Recently, the Indian Minister of the Environment, Jairam Ramesh, announced in Parliament that his country wants to reintroduce the cheetah, setting off a remarkable media interest and a discussion within the conservation community. Some conservationists argued that India should rather concentrate on more topical and urgent issues, namely the mitigation of the tiger crisis. However, MK Ranjitsinh, chairman of the Wildlife Trust of India and driving force behind the cheetah initiative, argued the India's arid

habitats urgently need more attention and that the cheetah could become a flagship species for the conservation of India's valuable grasslands as the tiger is for the woodlands. WTI organised a consultative meeting on the reintroduction of the cheetah and invited Indian and international experts to Gajner, a potential cheetah reintroduction site in north-western India.

The origin of founder animals was a crucial topic discussed in Gajner. Steve O'Brien, the leading felid geneticist, argued that all cheetahs are so closely related that the origin of the source population would not matter. Although the Iranian cheetahs are the closest relatives to the extinct Indian cheetahs, they live in rugged mountainous terrain, a habitat very different from India's open grasslands. In Africa, many cheetah populations live in landscapes more similar to the designated reintroduction sites. But a viable cheetah (meta-) population needs vast areas, and it remained unclear whether the proposed protected areas offer sufficient habitat and prey. The Wildlife Institute of India was commissioned to perform a more detailed habitat analysis.



International Conference on Range-wide Conservation Planning for Snow Leopards

Beijing, China, 7 – 11 March 2008



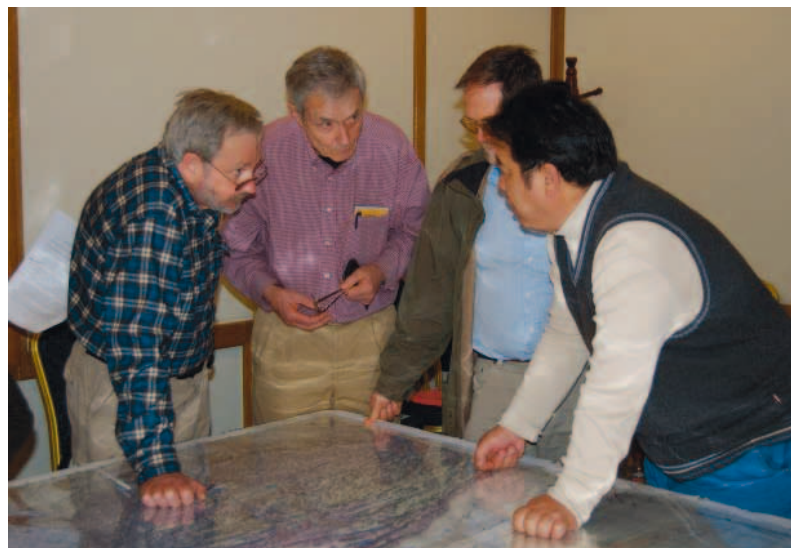
Over 100 snow leopard experts, conservationists, and government officials met in Beijing for a conference for conservation planning for snow leopard throughout its range. The conference was organised by Panthera, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Snow Leopard Trust (SLT), Snow Leopard Network (SLN), and the Chinese Institute of Zoology.

Snow leopards are found in 12 countries of Central Asia, with an estimated population of 4,500 to 7,350 snow leopards in an area of 1,853,000 km². Experts from 11 range countries were mapping specific and local knowledge about snow leopard distribution in order to identify Snow Leopard Conservation Units for the long-term conservation of the splendid cat. The process also revealed

areas with good and poor knowledge on the species' status and will provide guidance to biologists and conservationists for a more targeted approach to snow leopard research and conservation.

After two days of mapping exercise, presentations were given to share expertise on snow leopard conservation and research methods. Keynote speeches by George Schaller, Urs Breitenmoser and Tom Kaplan were followed by presentations on best conservation practices and research methods.

Participants from range-state governments, conservation organisations and scientific institutions then translated the new range maps with the Snow Leopard Conservation Units into country specific conservation activities for snow leopards.





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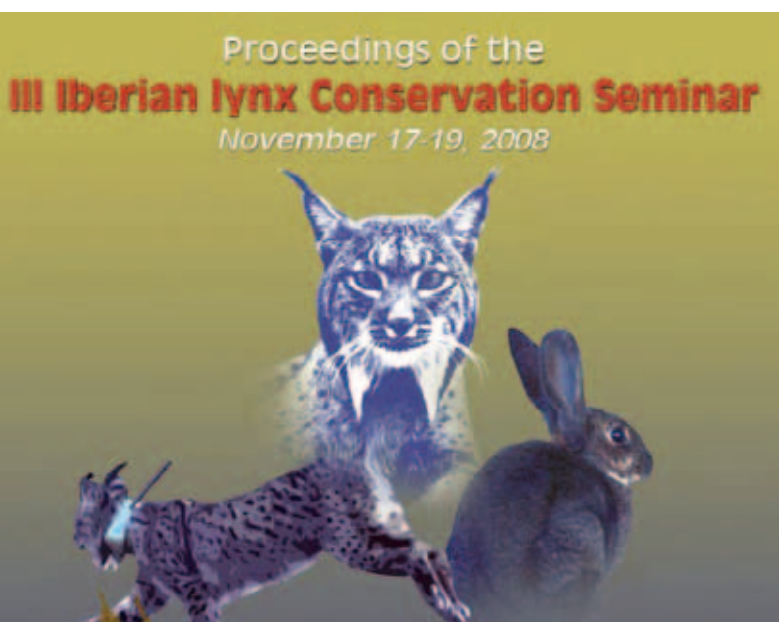
The regional environmental ministry of the Andalusian Government (Junta de Andalucía), in collaboration with the Spanish Ministry of Environment, the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group and Life projects of the European Commission organised within the framework of the Life-Nature 06/NAT(E00209) project the 3rd International Iberian Lynx Seminar. This series was initiated by the Cat SG in 2002 with the 1st Seminar in Andujar.

The Iberian lynx is an endangered species in Spain, and extinct in Portugal. The species is strictly protected in Europe by the Berne

Convention, the protection of its habitat is a priority of the European Commission Directive 92/43, and it is included in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora CITES as a species threatened with extinction. The Iberian lynx is the only cat species listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List.

The 3rd Lynx Seminar focused on the implementation of the Life project actions, namely the creation of new population nuclei within the historic range of the species by means of reintroduction.

The first two days were dedicated to theoretical, practical and organisational aspects of reintroducing a predator into a cultivated landscape. At the end of these two days, the reintroduction plan for the Iberian lynx was presented. This plan was prepared by the Life Lince project team and the Cat SG Co-chairs during a visit of the Spanish conservationists in Switzerland in June 2008. We presented our view of long-term goals and approaches for the recovery of the Iberian lynx on the first day. On the third day, working groups discussed this reintroduction plan and came up with a proposal for the four following aspects: (1) strategy and long-term goals, (2) rehabilitation and release protocols, (3) post-release monitoring and (4) communication and public involvement.



Identification of potential tiger habitat in the Changbaishan Ecosystem

northeast China, 2008 – 2009



In a collaborative effort of WCS, WWF, Harbin Northeast Normal University, University of Montana, KORA and the Cat Specialist Group, a habitat model was developed to delineate potential tiger habitat in the Changbaishan ecosystem of northeast China.

Only a few Siberian tigers live in Northeast China, and the Amur leopard appears only occasionally. The current population of wild tigers is estimated at 18-24 individuals in China, while adjacent forested habitats in the Russian Far East hold 430-500 tigers. The "Technical Report on the Identification of Potential Tiger Habitat in the Changbaishan Ecosystem, Northeast China" revealed that vast tracts of natural forest still exist throughout eastern Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces that tigers and eventually the leopards could re-colonise.

The Changbaishan habitat modelling exercise aimed to assess the potential of the landscape to host wild tigers. The central goals were to determine where sufficiently large blocks of habitat could retain populations of tigers, explore the connectivity between patches of habitat and with the source population in the Russian Far East, and prioritize these areas and corridors on the basis of their importance for tiger recovery in Northeast China. The study showed that approximately 38,500 km² of potential tiger habitat remains in the Changbaishan landscape, divided into nine distinct Tiger Conservation Priority Areas (TPA).

Four of these areas - Hunchun-Wangqing (14,239 km²), Changbaishan (8,420 km²), Southern Zhangguangcailing (5,373 km²), and Mulin (3,231 km²) include 81% of potential tiger habitat, and have the greatest potential for recovery of tigers, and potential ecological corridors linking these TPAs have been identified. The Chinese authorities responded very positively to the report; in May 2010, the nine identified TPAs were all granted the status of protected areas. However, these forests, though now protected, are still empty. Before the large cats can come back, their prey populations must be rebuilt and efficiently protected.



Cats in China Workshop at SCB Congress in Beijing 2009

Production of a special issue of *Cat News*



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China hosts 13 of the 37 wild cat species with numerous subspecies, and is one of the most important countries for the conservation of felids. The global status of the cat species living in China in the IUCN Red List ranges from Least Concern to Critically Endangered. For some species, the Chinese part of their distribution area is the most significant of their global range and one species (*Felis bieti*) and several subspecies are endemic to the country. For these species, a global assessment is highly speculative without reliable information from China. However, the available information on distribution, abundance and trends of most of the Chinese cat populations are too limited or too outdated to allow for a regional assessment of their status according to IUCN Red List criteria. A comprehensive review

of the status, distribution, and trends of cat populations occurring in China would not only allow for a regional assessment, but would, for many species, considerably advance global assessment and identification of conservation needs.

The Cat Specialist Group has initiated the project *Cats in China* with a workshop at the International Conference of the Society for Conservation Biology in Beijing in 2009. The goals of the project are (1) to create a network of cat conservation specialists for China in order to improve or develop monitoring methods for the cats in China, and to help the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group and the Chinese institutional partners to improve the survey and conservation of China's cat species; and (2) to compile and publish a baseline report (in English and Chinese) on the distribution and conservation status for the thirteen cat species occurring in China. This report will be published in December 2010 as a Special Issue of *Cat News*, the publishing organ of the Cat Specialist Group. *Cats in China* is a collaborative project of the National Wildlife Research and Development Centre (NWRDC), the Department of Wildlife Conservation of the State Forestry Administration, the Cat Specialist Group and Chinese and international cat conservationists.



CBSG and Cat SG Facilitate Clouded Leopard and Small Felid Summit

Bangkok, Thailand, 28 – 30 January 2009



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The Clouded Leopard and Small Felid Conservation Summit was held January 28–30 at Kasetsart University in Bangkok, Thailand. Kasetsart University's Faculty of Forestry invited IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG) and IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group to facilitate this workshop. Using CBSG tools and processes designed specifically for this type of conservation issue, the workshop brought together a diverse group of 65 participants from 13 countries. Southeast Asia has a tremendous diversity in wildlife and is particularly rich in felid species, including nine species of small or medium size wild cats: clouded leopard (mainland SE Asia), Sundaland clouded leopard (Borneo and Sumatra), marbled cat, jungle cat, golden cat, flat-headed cat, fishing cat, Borneo bay cat and leopard cat. Recent findings from field surveys and wildlife trade monitoring indicate that many of these felids may be facing significant population declines due to the impacts of habitat destruction and fragmentation, declining prey base, and targeted hunting.

There is a lack of data on the distribution, status, and ecology of small felids to inform conservation planning for these species. The Clouded

Leopard and Small Felid Conservation Summit was conceived to facilitate information exchange, communication, and collaboration among the many independent parties working in small felid conservation. Participants summarized all available information and produced Population and Habitat Tables and distribution maps detailing the location, distribution, and abundance of clouded leopards and other small felids in their region. Then the major issues related to clouded leopard and small felid conservation were identified and prioritised. Finally, each group developed specific actions, relevant to the situation in the various SE Asian range countries, to accomplish the goals, taking into account the scientific information on the species, their habitats, and the threats identified.



Workshop to develop a National Conservation Strategy for lions and spotted hyaenas for Kenya

Nairobi, Kenya, 18 – 20 February 2008



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Recent assessments of lion numbers in Africa range from 23,000 to 39,000, indicated a possible decline of 30-50% compared to earlier estimations. A proposal at the 13th Conference of Parties to CITES in October 2004 to up-list the lion to Appendix I, and further restrict trade in lion trophies sparked extensive debate among African range states, and highlighted the need to achieve pan-African consensus on lion conservation. The proposal was withdrawn, but range states agreed that a series of regional lion conservation workshops should be held. IUCN was asked to organise these workshops, which would bring together stakeholders to develop regional lion conservation strategies. The Eastern and Southern African Lion Conservation Strategy was de-

veloped in January of 2006 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The regional strategy provides general guidance at regional or meta-population level, in particular for the conservation of cross-border populations, and should be implemented through National Action Plans. Kenya Wildlife Service KWS asked IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group co-chairs Urs and Christine Breitenmoser and then IUCN/SSC Hyaena Specialist Group chair Gus Mills to facilitate a workshop on national level. The KWS proposed to combine the two species because there is a wide overlap both regarding threats and conservation needs as well as experts able to provide information. The spotted hyaena is listed as Least Concern in the IUCN Red List, but suffers regionally or locally a considerable decline, mainly as a consequence of conflict with people. The purpose of the workshop was to develop a National Conservation Strategy for lions and spotted hyaenas in Kenya, in a participative and consensus driven process involving local partners to ensure that the plan is jointly owned by stakeholders. And participatory it was! The workshop took place in February 2008, right during a period of political unrest and riots. While across the country different political groups were fighting each other, the workshop united people with diverse background and interests, emphatically working together to save part of their common natural heritage. The plan also contains an appendix summarising current knowledge on striped hyaenas.



National Conservation Action Planning workshop for cheetah, wild dogs and lions

Juba, Southern Sudan, 30 March – 3 April 2009 Juba



African wild dogs, cheetahs and lions present major challenges for conservationists today. All three species were formerly widely distributed in Africa, but have experienced dramatic reductions in numbers and range in recent decades. As human populations encroach on Africa's last wild areas, large carnivores – conflict-ridden and wide-ranging and hence particularly susceptible to habitat alteration and fragmentation – are often the first species to disappear.

Recognising these concerns, in 2006 the Cat and Canid Specialist Groups of the IUCN/SSC, in partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), initiated a Rangewide Conservation Planning process for cheetahs and wild dogs. A key component of this process is a series of workshops, bringing together specialists on the species' biology with conservation managers from governmental and non-governmental organisations. For lions, the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group partnered with a parallel initiative of WCS to organize a Rangewide Priority Setting (RWPS) exercise for lions, providing input for the Regional Conservation Strategies for lions in Africa. Since wildlife conservation policy is formulated, authorised, implemented and enforced at the national level, it is critical that conservation planning is also done and enacted

at this level. The Ministry of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism of the Government of Southern Sudan asked for support to conduct a national workshop to develop action plans for cheetahs, wild dogs and lions. Sarah Durant, ZSL/WCS, Amy Dickman, Ruaha Carnivore Project, WildCRU, and Christine Breitenmoser, IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group, led this workshop as facilitators. The workshop was officially opened by Minister Agnes Poni Lukudu and attended by 34 participants, all of whom worked very enthusiastically and successfully produced national action plans. Travelling to South Sudan was quite an endeavour, as the official government of Sudan was very reluctant to issue any visas for the rebellious south part of the country.



Workshop to develop a National Conservation Strategy and Action Plan for lions in Mozambique

Maputo, Mozambique, 16 – 17 July 2009



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In the spirit of following the recommendations from the Regional Conservation Strategy for lions in southern Africa, range countries, together with IUCN and support from the Safari Club International Foundation (SCIF), have developed or are now in the process of developing national lion action plans for the African lion. These plans will motivate and co-ordinate lion conservation activity both regionally and nationally.

The development of the Mozambican lion action plan commenced with a national survey on the conservation status of the lion in the country. This first step was considered essential since the available information on the species at national level was very weak. Some

anecdotal information was provided by protected area personnel, but not scientifically reliable. The only area with sufficient data on lions in Mozambique is the National Reserve of Niassa, where, since 2003, the Niassa Carnivore Project has been monitoring carnivores, including the lion population, which was estimated 800 to 1,000 heads. The country-wide survey was carried out by the IGF Foundation (Fondation Internationale pour la Gestion de la Faune) in collaboration with the National Directorate of Conservation Areas (DNAC, Ministry of Tourism) and the National Directorate of Land and Forestry (Ministry of Agriculture) in 2008 and 2009.

The workshop to develop a national lion action plan was held in Maputo on 1-17 July 2009, facilitated by the Cat Specialist Group and attended by Government representatives, including the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, PAs personnel, the IGF Foundation, conservation NGOs, and the private sector, including the Hunting Operators Association of Mozambique. Lion conservation in Mozambique is clearly not only important to conservationists, and the broad interest at ministerial level gives hope that the Action Plan will be implemented.



National Planning workshop for jaguars in Brazil

Atibaia, Brazil, 9 – 13 November 2009



CENAP, the National Centre for Research and Conservation of Mammalian Carnivores at the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio), in collaboration with the Pró-Carnívoros Institute, Brazil, and the US organisation Panthera, organised a jaguar conservation workshop in Atibaia, São Paulo State, Brazil from 10–13 November 2008. IUCN, through the Cat Specialist Group (Cat SG) and the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG – Brazil), supported the workshop.

A habitat suitability model was developed to identify priority areas for jaguar conservation and the Jaguar Conservation Units and corridors identified by Panthera were updated. The impact of various threats on the long-term survival of jaguars was analysed in a Population Viability Model, and a regional Red List assessment was carried out for the five biomes where jaguars occur, namely Pantanal, Amazone, Catingaa, Cerrado and Atlantic Forest. All outcomes will be published as a Special Issue of Cat News. These findings were used to define objectives and actions for a National Action Plan for the jaguar. More than 200 actions were proposed by the participants. Finally, 10 actions were listed as priority for each of the five jaguar biomes of the national territory, resulting in a total of 50 priority actions for jaguar conservation across Brazil.

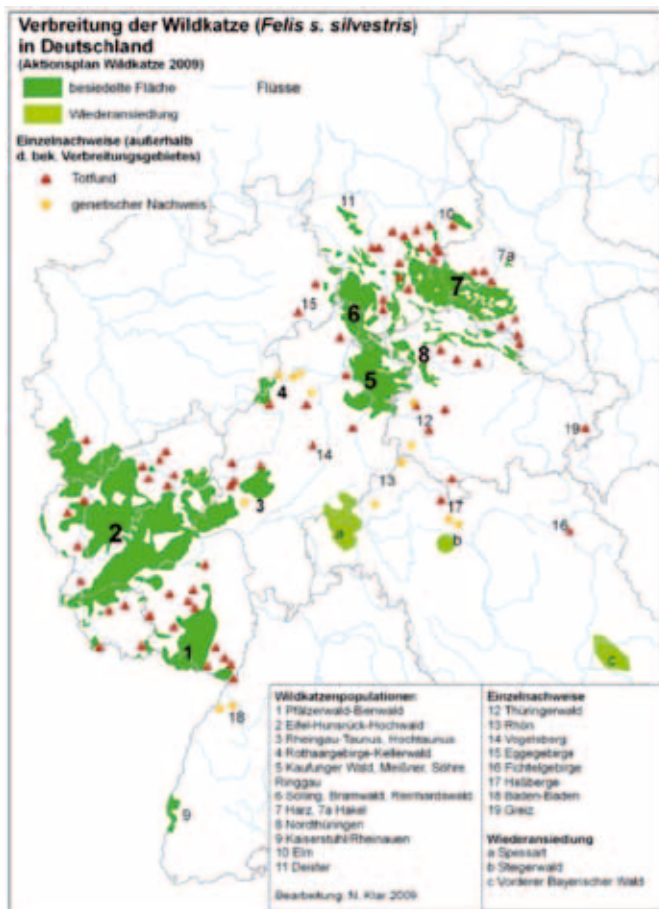
Discussions followed six thematic lines, namely (1) public policies, (2) poaching, (3) conflicts, (4) education and communication, (5) research, and (6) habitat loss and fragmentation.

The Action Plan will direct emergency efforts to areas where the jaguar faces the greatest risk of extinction in the short and mid-term. One of these regions is north-eastern Brazil, which now harbours less than 250 individuals and risks losing the population within 60 years, if persecution in retaliation to cattle predation and conversion of natural habitats continues at the present pace.





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Wildcat and conservation experts from Germany, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and Slovakia met in Wiesenfelden, Bavaria, to discuss the future of the wildcat in Germany. On the first day, along with talks presenting the situation in various regions of central Europe, we presented the assessment procedure of the IUCN Red List for the wildcat.

During the following days and group works, an Action Plan for the protection of the wildcat in Germany was compiled. The wildcat is a flagship species for ecologically rich and interconnected forest habitats in Germany. The wildcat is also a priority species in the Fauna and Flora EU Habitat Directives and therefore requires consequent protection across Europe. Only recently, the wildcat has reappeared in the public perception and has become a topic in nature conservation. Research projects have brought important information on distribution, ecology and threats to the wildcat. The species has also seen a long-lasting decline in Germany. It was – with still undetermined success – reintroduced in the Spessart, Steigerwald and in Vorderer Bayerischer Wald. Recently, autochthonous populations in the Elbe-Hundsrück and in the Harz region seem to make a comeback. But increasing fragmentation and traffic accidents as a consequence of new road construction are threatening this renaissance. The action plan provides the necessary tool to implement local, regional and national effective protection measures, such as safe road crossing assistance and control systems along critical road sections, or habitat improvement for agricultural zones used by wildcats as corridors.

But wildcats are difficult to detect - they live secretly and cannot be visually differentiated from similarly coloured domestic cats. Monitoring and survey methods were therefore widely discussed at the meeting. Genetic methods are a most promising, but not yet a fully reliable tool to assess the presence of wildcats in an area or to detect hybridisation with domestic cats.

It is planned to revise the Action Plan every five years.

Workshop to develop a Regional Conservation Strategy for the lynx on the Balkans

Peshtani, Macedonia, 8 – 10 June 2008



The Balkan lynx is a highly threatened subspecies of the Eurasian lynx existing only in the border areas of Albania and Macedonia and probably in Montenegro and the Kosovo. Since a few years, we have been working with local NGOs and universities to survey and conserve the Balkan lynx in the frame of the Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme BLRP. The project also aims to further cross-border cooperation and to develop capacities on all levels, including the conservation institutions and wildlife managing agencies. The Balkan Lynx Conservation Strategy as a guiding document was developed in June 2008 in Peshtani (MK) in a participative workshop. Participants were from governmental agencies (ministries, national parks), universities and interest groups (hunting associations, veterinary services, nature conservation NGOs). The goal was defined as "Secure a viable population of the Balkan lynx living in a matrix of protected and sustainably managed habitat in coexistence with the rural population".

The Strategy was presented to and endorsed by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention in Strasbourg on 24.11.2008. Although we still wait for the Strategy to be officially endorsed by the

relevant authorities in Albania and Macedonia, we tackled the next step, which was to define activities into more detail on the national level. National Action Plans were developed in two participative workshops in June 2009 in Skopje and Tirana, respectively. The workshop in Macedonia was attended by various interest groups and several governmental representatives and resulted in a practical work plan for the conservation of the lynx. The workshop in Albania, however, was a private discussion among BLRP colleagues. None of the invited representatives who had confirmed their participation showed up. Lack of professionalism and education, lack of interest, and the awkward habit to expect baksheesh for any service or action makes it difficult to work with officials.



Small felid trapping workshop

Muri, Switzerland, 23 – 25 April 2009



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We know almost nothing about the small felids of Southeast Asia, but we know that they are threatened and that their habitat is dwindling by the day. Field research providing biological and ecological information is urgently needed, and several research projects have recently been launched to elucidate such information for species like the Asiatic gold cat or the marbled cat. However, a huge challenge is to capture these elusive animals in order to equip them with a radio collar. Reliable capture methodology has not yet been developed, and consequently, very few animals have been collared.

We were visited by Jenny McCarthy and Kate Jenkins, responsible for field research projects on Sumatra and in Thailand, respectively, and brought them together with Malte Götz and Saskia Jerosch, who have profound experience with the capture of wildcats in the Harz Mountains. The goal of the workshop was to broadly discuss methodologies that had been successful for the capture of small and medium-sized felid species, and to come up with new ideas how to more effectively capture cats in Southeast Asia.

Each group of participants presented the capture techniques employed in their studies, e.g. European wildcat in Germany, Eurasian lynx in Switzerland, and three sympatric felids on Sumatra. Techniques for each project were discussed in detail, including trap type and dimensions, trapping season, bait and lures utilised, capturing sites. Then, we brainstormed on capture methodologies and possible adaptations of current trapping techniques for the small felids of Southeast Asia.





In January 2009, two male wildcats were caught in the Swiss Jura Mountains in chicken coops. The winter was harsh, and the two cats were hungry and emaciated. The game wardens brought them to a wildlife rehabilitation station, where they stayed until they had recovered. When they were released again, we radio-collared the two wildcats, in order to observe whether they were able to reintegrate into the population.

We took this opportunity to train students from Switzerland, Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic in field techniques such as telemetry and camera trapping. During five months, the two cats were followed intensively by means of telemetry to document their movements, range use, habitat use and resting sites. Both cats stayed near the release sites. Within 60 days, they covered about 90% of their subsequent home ranges of 12.5 km² and 9.1 km², respectively. They were mainly active during the night and used more often slopes with southern exposure, where they hunted along forest edges. During 24h-surveys, the cats travelled 0.4–3.3 km. For one month, 11 and 13 camera traps were set in

the home ranges of the two males, in order to detect conspecifics. Three wildcat pictures were taken – but they were all of one of the tagged males.

The short but intensive observation of the two wildcats in the Jura Mountains provided some insight into the ecology of the species and allowed training several students in field methodology. Four of the students have subsequently chosen a thesis subject on carnivores. Additionally, we documented the successful reintegration of two wildcats in the wild after they had spent four months in a rehabilitation centre.



Services to members and partners

2008/2009



Cat News

In 2008 and 2009, we have published the regular issues Cat News 48–51 and Special Issue No 4 on Jaguars in Brazil. In 2009, No 50 was published in a new, modernised look, designed by Barbara Surber. We have also formalised the submission and publication process. Cat News has now five defined categories of articles: original contributions, short communications, news from around the world, from our partners, and the forum. Original contributions and Short communications are now subject to a formal peer review process.

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Digital Cat Library

We have newly integrated over 500 publications into the now fully searchable Digital Cat Library DCL – thanks to a software tool developed by Guillaume Chapron – and presented highlights on

Eurasian lynx, Canada lynx, fishing cat and leopard. Since spring 2009, Panthera has been supporting the DCL, which allows us to do more frequent updates.

Project of the Month

We continuously presented a Project of the Month on the Cat SG website (www.catsg.org) during 2008 and 2009, on leopard conservation in Iran, phylogeography of jungle cat and leopard cat in India, tiger conservation on Sumatra, lions in Benin, felids in Sabah, Malaysia, huigüña in southern Chile, and fishing cat in Thailand. A very special Project of the Month was a drawing contest for kids, where all cat specialists across the world were judging the artwork of 11 years old students.

Cat Advisory Council of Panthera

The Panthera Cat Advisory Council harnesses the thinking, experience, and charisma of some of the best minds in the field of cat research and conservation in order to help steer Panthera's scientific initiatives. In February 2009, we have participated in the first meeting in New York.

Small Cat Action Fund (SCAF)

SCAF is a grants programme established by Panthera with the advice of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group. The fund is supporting in situ conservation and research activities on the smaller cat species. During 2008 and 2009, we have reviewed 40 proposals, 16 of which got funded.

Wild Cat Club founded to support the Cat Specialist Group

28 October 2009



To extend its current activities in capacity development and for the successful implementation of further conservation projects, the Cat Specialist Group needs to maintain its economical and political independence and requires continuous and reliable financial support.

With this in mind, the Wild Cat Club has been created in spring 2009. Wild Cat Club members support the Cat Specialist Group financially and by doing so provide a valuable contribution to help the organisation in its engagement for cat conservation.

Financial contributions of Wild Cat Club members flow directly into the Cat Specialist Group's operational activities and are not diluted through an administrative superstructure. Wild Cat Club Members benefit from special privileges. Every year, the Cat Specialist Group is arranging a trip to visit a current cat conservation project. Besides gaining personal impressions of these projects, participants will experience truly unique encounters with wilderness and foreign cultures, including a reasonable taste of adventure.

Members of the Wild Cat Club are invited to a dinner twice a year, a special event during which the co-chairs and member of the Cat Specialist Group present news and information on various projects in a relaxed atmosphere.

Besides private members, we have been able to gain also the support of three Swiss companies.

The Wild Cat Club is a non-profit Swiss-based association where donations are tax-deductible.

The first months were used to build up the necessary infrastructure such as a newsletter and a website, and to do all the formalities for the recognition of the non-profit status.

Cat Day at the Museum of Natural History in Bern, Switzerland

1 November 2008



1 November 2008 was cat day at the Museum of Natural History in Berne. In collaboration with the museum and with the support of Stämpfli Publikationen AG, the printer of Cat News, we organised a one-day conference on cat conservation. The day had three parts: (1) A conference with eight talks about cat conservation projects from around the world. Speakers were David Mallon (snow leopard), Astrid Vargas (Iberian lynx), Stephan Hertwig (European wildcat), Alex Sliwa (black-footed cat), Manuel von Arx (Balkan lynx), Jim Sanderson (Andean cat), Urs Breitenmoser (IUCN Red List), and Christine Breitenmoser-Würsten (conservation strategy for cheetahs). (2) A late afternoon session with presentations on the activities of the Cat Specialist Group, where we presented the idea to found a specific sponsor group for the Cat SG. (3) The opening of the exhibition Focus on Nature: Wild cats of the world by Linda duPuis-Rosen and Rochelle Mason, followed by a buffet offered by the Museum of Natural History. Linda, one of the artists, came from California to spend the day with us. Over 100 participants attended the Cat Day. They came from all over Switzerland, Germany and Austria, from as far as Berlin and Vienna. We received a lot of positive feedback and will organise another Cat Day in the future.



Staff and ...

We wish to thank all the dedicated colleagues and members of the Cat Specialist Group for their hard work throughout 2008 and 2009. Working very closely with the Cat Specialist Group Co-chairs were Manuela von Arx (Assistant to the Chair), Anna Huber (book keeping), Kristin Nowell (Focal Point of the Cat SG Red List Authority), Peter Jackson (Advisor to the Chair and Co-editor of Cat News): a great thank you to all of them.

We would like to thank the many dedicated people who helped develop and run the various projects in 2008/2009: Fridolin Zimmermann (Balkan lynx project, tiger habitat model China), Yves Tschumper and Ursula Kurt (Digital Cat Library), Eva Jutzeler (Cats in China), Kristina Vogt (Strategic Conservation planning), Markus Jenny and Anto Raja Dominic (interns GIS for cats), Keith Richmond and Brian Bertam (associate editors Cat News). We would also like to thank the many colleagues who have contributed to the website, Cat News and the Digital Cat Library.

Alex Sliwa has generously donated a lot of his superb cat pictures for Cat SG purposes, also for this report, many thanks.

... Sponsors

Although much of our work as an IUCN/SSC Specialist Group is done on a voluntary basis, our projects would not be possible without financial support from many committed institutions and private persons. We would like to thank the following organisations for their partnership and support: Friends of the Cat Group, Wild Cat Club, Panthera, Howard Buffet Foundation, Zurich Animal Protection Society, MAVA Foundation, Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi, UAE, Junta de Andalucia, Taiwan State Forestry Administration, Wildlife Trust of India, UNDP/GEF, Wildlife Conservation Society, WWF Germany, Frankfurt Zoological Society, Kenya Wildlife Trust, Safari Club International Foundation, Innflow AG, Stämpfli Publikationen AG, Fundación Biodiversidad, Zoo Basel, Patrick Meier, Peter Stämpfli, Jean-Claude Tschumper.